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ABSTRACT

Common elements exist in undergraduate and graduate education of reading teachers in knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience; however, the two groups, differing in teaching experiences and preparing for different roles, require different programs. The first group seeking the skills for effective teaching of reading in a classroom requires continuing guided exposure and opportunities to test their abilities within regular classrooms in order to recognize and understand the interrelatedness of psychological principles, the function of reading in the classroom, and the characteristics of group and individual learning. Given these supervised experiences with many opportunities for discussion on problems encountered, they should be able to function at a level where they use their acquired knowledge and skills consciously. The second group, influenced greatly by past teaching experience and presenting an even greater spread of capabilities than the undergraduates, requires more careful screening in terms of performance and, frequently, specific placement into undergraduate work prior to admission into graduate study. Programs for admitted students should be individually designed according to their future roles. Graduate study should consist of advanced study--not remediation for inadequacies in undergraduate training. References are included. (Author/AW)

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TRAINING READING TEACHERS AT THE GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL - THERE SHOULD BE A DIFFERENCE

Session - Teacher Training Programs

Changes in Teacher Education

There has been much said about the need for changes in teacher education and in criteria for certification; Elam (5:3-6) suggests that teacher education be performance oriented in order to allow for the varied competencies of students and provide the opportunities necessary for students to begin to observe learning taking place. The focus must be on the child's learning---not on "how to teach"---supposedly the previous focus of ineffective methods courses. Clearly defined objectives and specific assessment skills are a part of many performance-oriented teacher training programs. Varied types of performance activities are planned for each of the four or five years

of the trainee's college work: observation in the freshman year, tutorial work with individuals and/or small groups during the sophomore year, serving as teacher aides during the junior year, as internes during the senior year, etc. These activities, guided properly so that students have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills, as they learn to assess their own performance, will, no doubt, provide a greater sense of security for the beginning teacher. Preparation is not restricted to the college classroom---the student hasn't been told about what's "out there," by professors who haven't been "out there" lately---another criticism of methods courses.

The more recently trained teacher may become a better teacher than her predecessor whose practical experiences during her college years were limited to a Junior Year Practicum and a Senior Year Student Teaching. However, valid research affirming the superiority of the performance orientation will be necessary. Elam confesses "that no one can predict what the residual effects of performance--based teacher education will be 10 to 20 years from now." Expressing doubt that expansion will occur rapidly enough to make a significant difference or that evaluation techniques will improve sufficiently for valid and reliable measurement of the affective and cognitive objectives involved in the performance-based experiences, Elam indicates that teacher education will probably benefit through an instructional pattern that stresses individualization and through emphasis on precise and detailed specification of objectives. (5:3-6)

Actually, if one of the major problems in training reading teachers was the sparsity of course requirements in the field of Reading, then it can be assumed that Professors of Reading contributed little to the previous inadequacies in teacher eduction. In fact, Austin's study seems to indicate that the cooperating teachers "exerted unchallenged influence upon the instructional behavior of beginning teachers." (1:218) Following the suggestions of Austin (2:165) and others, emphasis is now made on additional and significantly different types of course design for teacher trainees.

A six credit requirement for K-P's and G-E's plus a 3 credit requirement for Secondary majors has been met in a few teacher--training institutions. Thelen's (10:614) recent study stated that 47% of the states polled indicated a course in the teaching of reading is required for certification; three states cited six credit hour requirements. Contrasted to the 14% (requiring a reading course) found in Austin's study, improvement has been made.

At the Graduate level, programs training Reading Specialists have become more numerous, no doubt, related to the fact that 63% of the states have certification for reading specialists. Thus, today's Professor of Reading has a greater opportunity to alter reading practices in the schools and can now be held accountable for teachers' failures and, indirectly, children's failures in acquiring adequate reading skills.

Goals for Undergraduate Trainees

What teaching competencies are necessary for the pre-school

teacher, the kindergarten-primary teacher, the general elementary teacher, the secondary teacher, the Junior College teacher, and lastly, the college teacher? What competencies are necessary for the graduate student assuming the role of reading specialist, reading consultant, reading supervisor, reading clinician, etc.? Obviously, necessary knowledge, attitudes and competencies will vary from district to district and for different positions. It is just as obvious that each undergraduate or graduate student cannot be trained specifically to fulfill all of these varied roles. Colleges should provide many opportunities for carefully guided performance activities as a part of the learning experience through course structure or independent study, however, the college's primary concern must be with the goals behind the experiences. What attitudes and competencies can we reasonably hope to achieve at the undergraduate level? Do these goals vary according to the students' specialization or interests or is there a common set of goals?

Austin stated . . . "neither textbook nor theoretical discussion can train students to teach reading. Involvement of three types is necessary---in the arts and sciences, professional studies, and the schools." (1:218) Prior to and concurrent with the reading course work and/or performance activities of undergraduate students, multi--disciplinary study is essential for providing a background of understanding in child development, the learning process, cognitive and affective factors, the interrelatedness of reading, linguistics, psycholinguistics and all communication skills; classroom management is a major concern.

Powell speaks very specifically to goals when he raises the question "What makes a reading teacher unique---whether he is a classroom teacher of reading, a remedial reading teacher, a reading consultant or an English teacher?" He noted specific abilities: (a) to teach diagnostically, (b) to determine individual reading levels, (c) to determine, interpret and apply data on potential, (d) to understand the cognitive system (e) to comprehend the concept of readability, (f) to know and be able to use phonics, structural analysis and linguistic patterns in all of their interrelationships. To teach diagnostically, one must "develop conceptual maps of those items which are related to the task, the sound system, the cognitive system, the symbol system, the affective system, the error system and the notion of syndromes." (9:606)

Graduate Study

Powell notes that teachers operate at ". . . various levels of effectiveness. At the verbal level of functioning, the correct words and the jargon of the field are used." A higher level of effectiveness---the performance level includes two stages, first where the teacher "knows the primary systems, but applies them only with conscious effort" and the lower stage where the teacher "has the knowledge and maps but does not use them." Powell's highest functioning level is the automatic; "the knowledge, the strategies, and the attitude all become blended into one and become a part of the person." (9:606) For most undergraduate students, probably the highest level of effectiveness cannot be achieved. However, improved experiences should enable them to acquire various skills, attitudes

and concepts which they apply with conscious effort in their initial positions. To acquire the individual's highest level of teaching effectiveness and to provide for changes in role, graduate study is necessary.

What are the characteristics of the average graduate student seeking a master's degree in the field of Reading?

1. Generally, they've had some teaching experience and continue teaching as they take graduate work.
2. Some have been frustrated by their attempts to develop reading skills in groups---or for specific individuals.
3. Others feel they have something special to offer children or other teachers through assuming the role of reading specialist, supervisor or consultant.
4. Still others, unprepared, have already assumed a specialized role.

The nature of the experiences, both educational and in the field, and the nature of the individual have contributed to a wide spread of differences in knowledge, attitudes and performances found in beginning graduate students. There are those who function at Powell's lowest level---the verbal stage, others have greater understanding but don't apply it, or apply it only consciously. The likelihood of encountering a beginning graduate student who has internalized all of the "knowledge, maps, strategies and attitudes" necessary for effective teaching of reading seems unlikely; to encounter one capable of transmitting all of these attributes to

others is even more remote.

How have these student differences affected Master's Degree Programs? While requirements vary, from school to school, basically they include a general reading methods course, specific diagnostic and treatment courses, some exposure to research and research techniques, and additional requirements in areas such as psychology, literature, psycholinguistics, and/or linguistics. Some programs do provide dual tracks dependent upon the students' goals---they can opt into a clinically oriented program or classroom teaching program. Most programs resulting in certification require some classroom and/or clinical experience. Some consideration may be given to students' weaknesses and strengths, but most programs designed to meet specific certification requirements are rather tightly structured. The determining factor in program directions seems to have been certification requirements, not student differences.

Perhaps the first step with graduate students would be to find out how they feel about their own strengths and weaknesses, followed by evaluation of performance ability and culminating in an individual program design of independent study, course work, research and internship which will best equip the individual for her future role. The writer submits that graduate faculty with appropriate background training and experience should be able to determine levels of functioning through interview, and survey tools. A check on knowledge of psychological principles, psycholinguistics, linguistics, literature and other related areas can be made along with the check on factual

knowledge in the theory and practice of reading. Results of the interview and survey may indicate that specific students should be placed into undergraduate experiences with admission into graduate study dependent upon acceptable performance at the lower level. Or an independent study, designed to strengthen weaknesses could be planned with admission dependent upon improved performance noted on a follow-up survey. The independent study could incorporate experiences as aides or internes in the College Reading Center, local clinical facilities of school programs, or a cooperatively planned reading program, or experimental work within the teacher's own classroom.

Using this approach with beginning graduate students should alleviate the lower performance levels found in beginning graduate students. However, the spread of knowledge and performance abilities remaining in admitted students will necessitate a flexible program in order to insure the specific knowledge and skills necessary to the varied roles which students will assume on graduation. Some students may be advised to study in such areas as psychology, supervision, research, etc. Others may be required to attend short-term performance workshops or institutes specifically designed to develop skills required in tneir specialized roles of clinicians, consultants, supervisors. Still others may benefit most through serving as aides or internes in consultant or supervisory roles, or on child-study teams in public schools, private clinics or at the College Center. As students advance, they should be guided into particular aspects of research which would be most useful to them in their present or future

roles.

Obviously, the nature of these proposals predicates a different role for many graduate professors, one which should assist them greatly in their efforts to translate theoretical knowledge into practice. The often rigid existing program design with specific course and credit requirements would be replaced by individual program designs with degree completion dependent upon performance at Powell's "automatic" level of effectiveness. Also, students' concepts of graduate study would alter; becoming a Reading Specialist, Consultant or Supervisor would not entail taking 32 credits and passing a written exam, but would require evidences of knowledge, skills, and the ability to perform in a specific role.

Summary

In summary, common elements exist in undergraduate and graduate education of reading teachers in knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience, however, the two groups, differing in teaching experiences and preparing for different roles, require different programs. The first group seeking the skills for effective teaching of reading in a classroom requires continuing guided exposure and opportunities to test their abilities within regular classrooms---to recognize and understand the interrelatedness of psychological principles, the function of reading in the classroom, and the characteristics of group and individual learning. Given these supervised experiences with many opportunities for discussion on problems encountered, they should be

able, in their initial employment, to function at a level where they use their acquired knowledge and skills consciously.

The second group, influenced greatly by past experience and presenting an even greater spread of capabilities than the undergraduates, require more careful screening in terms of performance, and, frequently, specific placement into undergraduate work, prior to admission into graduate study. Programs for admitted students should be individually designed according to their future roles. Graduate study should consist of advanced study--not remediation for inadequacies in undergraduate training.

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